

What Happened to Alice?

By Jana Jones

Episode 7 - Into the Woods

“Did you leave?” John Dawson skipped right past the hellos.

“I need to know what’s going on.” Ami tried to swallow down the feeling that she had just escaped something terrible.

“You really should have told me you were going to be down there, Ami. I would have told you not to go.”

“But I was talking with Faith—”

“Faith?! She’s one of them, too.”

“One of who, John? What the hell is going on?” Ami was too frazzled to speak clearly.

“That town, those people, the land— everything there is possessed. From the soil to the air, Ami. It’s evil. It’s why I left. I had to get away. I can’t even...it’s too much to explain. A lot of vile things have been done and covered up by that family. Covenants were made. I didn’t want to live under that...that black cloud anymore. I had to break free.”

“John, who is Alice?”

Silence hung on the phone line. Ami waited for her father to speak words that would make everything clear. The stretch of country road heading to the highway intersection seemed longer that evening. A light flashed in Ami’s peripheral vision. She looked up at the rearview mirror.

“I think I’m being followed.” Ami’s heart sank.

“Got enough gas?” John finally spoke up.

“Yeah.”

“Anyone else on out there besides you two?”

“No.”

“Then gun it.”

With her father’s permission, she floored the gas pedal and raced down the tree-lined road like something from a NASCAR race. The vehicle behind her accelerated as well. Although darkness was setting in, Ami could see it was an SUV with tinted windows.

The SUV rammed Ami’s rental car from the back. The impact caused Ami to jolt violently in her seat, but she continued. She had driven so far; the entrance to the highway had to be coming up soon.

“Ami?!” John’s voice was muffled since Ami’s phone had slipped under the passenger seat.

“I’m here. I just—”

The force of a second hit from the SUV caused Ami to lose control of the car as it careened into the dark forest.

A jolt of energy rushed through Ami’s body. There was no time to absorb the pain from the collision. Her life was at stake. She ran into the darkness for safety. Ami heard loud, hurried footsteps behind her.

She wondered who had sent them. Was it Aunt Darlene and her measured calmness? Uncle Clinton with his folksy wit? Perhaps it was Cousin Ramona, the one who casually described a possible relative as an “illegitimate”? What did they really think of Ami? An adoptee born to two hapless young parents.

As Ami continued running, she realized that part of her dream from the other night had become a reality. Would she see little girls in white as well? Tree branches angrily scratched at Ami’s face and arms. Her locs, once pulled up in a chic bun, fell down around her shoulders.

Ami thought about her birth mother – once a track star before life veered off course. The strength that powered her mother’s limbs now propelled her daughter through the dense unknown.

Everything became a blur as Ami continued to run deeper into the woods. As she raced between two trees, silk from an intricately designed spider web covered her face. Ami violently shook her head and wiped her face. She could only imagine what was in her hair.

Something told Ami to look up towards the sky. She squinted her eyes at what looked to be daylight. How long had she been running? Suddenly the air felt thinner, as if she had changed altitudes. Ami grabbed hold of a tree trunk to slow herself down. She slid onto a bed of leaves and rested her head against the tree base.

Whoever it was that rammed Ami’s car and chased her was now gone. As she wiped away the last few strands of the spider web, Ami watched in awe as the sky continued to brighten.

Over the loud, pulsating rhythm of her heartbeat, Ami heard a sound. Whistling. She slowly turned her head and saw five young children marching through the trees.

